

June 6, 2002

Public Notice for 401 Certification

**Gordon Ranch Project—Construction of 98 single-family residences on 19.06 acres located
at 1320 Gordon Lane, 1770 Allan Way, and 1925
Cooper Drive, Santa Rosa
Sonoma County**

On March 18, 2002 the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Mr. Harvey Rich of Cooper and Gordon LLC, requesting Water Quality Certification pursuant to administrative regulations and Clean Water Act Section 401.

The applicant proposed construction of 98 single-family residences consistent with the City of Santa Rosa's Southeast Area Plan (SEAP), which designates all Gordon Ranch for low density residential use, allowing 2 to 8 units per acre. These units would include 88 single-family detached homes, including a historic Victorian at the end of Cooper Drive, and 10 attached townhomes at the quarry site. This 19.06 acre site is south of Bennett Valley Road and east of the County Fairgrounds on three parcels located at 1320 Gordon Lane, 1770 Allan Way, and 1925 Cooper Drive. The project may also provide for future southerly local street expansion to Aston Avenue/Allan Way from existing end of Gordon Lane.

As proposed the project will involve the loss of 0.32 acres of jurisdictional wetlands. Included in the 0.32 acres of wetland losses would be 0.1 acres of seep, qualifying as unique habitat. Mitigation measures must be taken in order to avoid potential significant adverse impact to biological resources. The project proponent has entered into a contract to purchase 0.35 acres of wetland restoration credits at the Laguna Mitigation Bank as a replacement for the loss of seasonal wetland habitat on the project site. The proposed mitigation would meet the "no net loss" of wetland acreage requirement of the Regional Water Board. The Laguna foundation agreed to accept funds to be used specifically for restoration, enhancement, and preservation of 0.1 acres of palustrine, emergent wetland habitat on their project near in the Laguna de Santa Rosa. This mitigation effort will replace functions and values similar to those lost by the development of the seep at the project site. By preserving the trees that were to be retained, maintaining oaks, and planting native trees, impacts to the natural area of the stream will be avoided. Since all areas upstream of the bridge and steep slopes leading to the southern property line are unbuildable, a de facto preservation area will exist to permanently protect the creek. A storm water detention basin will be constructed in the northwest corner of the site to treat and detain the storm water runoff from the site, and will include plantings of native willows, oaks, buckeye, and shrubs that will replace the functions and values for the removed trees in this stretch of the abandoned stream.

The project would result in the removal of about 18.67 acres of natural open space, thereby causing an incremental, though minor loss of foraging habitat for a number of animal species that could potentially use resources at the site. According to the application, the loss of this habitat at the project site in itself would not cause any objective threshold of significance to be exceeded for cumulative impacts.

Storm water impacts are also factors of the Gordon Ranch Project. The two main impacts involve an increase in the quantity of storm water due to the addition of impervious surfaces. This includes an increase of the volume and the velocity of the water and reduces the amount of groundwater recharge. The second impact will increase the amount of pollutants caused by urbanization of the site. During construction the amount of sediment and erosion will be minimized by implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) (stated in Erosion Control Plan), and measures will be taken including seeding slopes and storage of construction materials. Post-construction storm water BMPs will be implemented in the project development, to reduce the potential for detrimental water quality impacts resulting from the storm water runoff. These include street sweeping, drain markings, vegetated swales, construction of a detention pond, minimization of impervious paved areas, minimize slope banks, minimization of house footprints, and retaining native trees.

This project does not require a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement permit from the Department of Fish and Game. Department of Fish and Game reviewed the project, and suggested mitigation for the loss of the wetland seep be made on-site, in the area of the remaining creek on the north-east side of the property. The applicant also applied for a conditional Nationwide Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 Permit No. 7 from the Army Corps of Engineers on October 25, 2001. The applicant applied for CEQA compliance through the City of Santa Rosa on March 12, 2002. Final Declaration is pending.

At this point, staff at the Regional Water Board are in the process of reviewing the project, addressing the decision regarding the issuance of the 401 Permit. In addition, staff will consider all comments received during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact staff member Andrew Jensen at (707) 576-2683.